

description in the *Illustrations*, and possibly the coloured figure, too, would have been very different, as in such populations the Fuscous areas of the dorsal feathers are suppressed to narrow, almost vestigial, lanceolate striae, and are often absent. This results in the dorsal surface being nearly as uniform as in the South-West African *M. a. harei* Roberts, 1917: Windhoek, Damaraland. In the freshly moulted specimen of such populations the mantle colouration is about Cinnamon (pl. xxix).

From the above it will be appreciated that Macdonald's restriction of the type-locality of *M. a. africanoides* Smith, 1836, to Colesberg (not Colesburg (sic!)) is in strict conformity with the evidence provided by Smith's original specimens in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) and the pertinent literature. It is unfortunate that Mr. White's contribution does not take into consideration my note on this interesting question in the *Durban Mus. Novit.*, vol. v, 8, 1958, pp. 99-101. A more recent note in the same publication, *op. cit.*, vol. v, 16, 1959, pp. 198, 199, also touches on this matter, while even more recently the S.A.O.S. List Committee, *vide Ostrich*, vol. xxx, 3, 1959, p. 111, has bestowed formal recognition to Colesberg as the officially accepted type-locality of *M. a. africanoides*.

In my recent work on the interior populations of this lark, I recognise the populations of Griqualand West and Bechuanaland, northern Cape Province, as discrete from *M. a. africanoides* and *M. a. harei* under the name *M. a. quaesita* Clancey, 1958: Rietfontein, Griquatown-Niekerkshoop road, Asbestos Mountains, northern Cape.

A note on the African Jaçana, *Actophilornis africanus* (Gmelin)

by CAPT. CHARLES R. S. PITMAN

Received 14th March, 1960

Chick carrying. According to Cave and Macdonald (1: p. 121) "Has been photographed carrying chick against its breast". In this connection Mr. C. W. Benson has sent me the following observation, which was made by Major W. E. Poles of the Northern Rhodesia Department of Game and Tsetse Control on 15th March, 1949, in the Bangweulu swamps, at 11° 45' S., 30° 00' E.

"I actually shot an African Jaçana that was carrying two newly hatched chicks but had no idea that it had young until I shot it. We surprised the bird as we came out from a narrow channel in the reeds into an open sheet of water, covered with lily pods. The Jaçana instead of flying off, as is usual, squatted on a lily leaf. It was too close so I allowed the canoe to pass. The bird then rose and went off at a good pace in a rather crouched attitude, just above the level of the water. When sufficiently far away, about 15 yards from where we first saw her, I fired and killed her. To my surprise I picked up two newly hatched chicks both killed with the mother by a single charge of dust from the .410. It was obvious that the only place she could have held them was beneath her wings".

Benson has seen these specimens in the National Museum, Bulawayo and comments "The two chicks are obviously only just out of the egg".

Down chick plumage. Chapin (2: p. 59), evidently with some diffidence, records "according to Emin, a chick taken from the egg was wholly velvet-

black, its bill flesh-red with whitish tip, and the large feet reddish gray with dark claws. His mention of the size of the feet would seem to obviate any error". In my own experience Emin's description is absolutely wrong and sounds more like that of a chick of the Black Crake, *Limnocorax flavirostra* (Swainson). Also it seems that Emin was unable to relate the chick to the egg, for the egg of *Actophilornis* is unmistakable.

Two down chicks, less than a week old, I collected on Lake Bunyonyi, in South-western Uganda, which are now in the British Museum (Natural History), have: the crown bright chestnut, edged black; the back chestnut-brown, long chestnut hairs predominating; nape and neck blackish shading broadly at base to sooty of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch width; pale duller brown on flanks with chestnut patch; tuft of black hairs on rump; cheeks, sides of neck and below whitish; bill, horn above and dull pale yellowish below; legs and feet, blue-grey with claws, horn.

The illustration, which is the photograph of a coloured drawing by Mrs. Benson, clearly shows the striped plumage of a day-old chick, and its exaggerated feet and legs at this early age.

Through the courtesy of the Director, I have examined Major Poles' two similarly striped chicks which are in the National Museum at Bulawayo. In these the bright chestnut median body stripe is divided by a narrow black streak and is edged black, with a conspicuous white lateral stripe which is then boldly edged black merging into the blackish flanks—

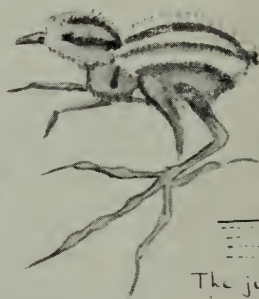


Baby Jacana

1 day old 21.4.47

Karonga F.M. Benson

(2 eggs in nest 20.4.47: 2 young 21.4.47 (p.m.))



Actophilornis
albicollis

The juvenile has submerged to just above its nostrils, to hide with only its beak above water. Excellently camouflaged.

with a chestnut patch posteriorly. Rump blackish; below white; thigh mainly white, with some black inside and posteriorly. The chestnut head is conspicuously marked with a median black stripe which broadens posteriorly at the back of the crown and on the nape: the forehead and cheeks are white.

The bill is horn above and paler below; the dry legs appear shiny black, tinged olive.

As the down chicks grow they lose their striped appearance, and chestnut coloration predominates above.

The above remarks indicate how erroneous is Emin's description.

Chicks mode of hiding. The two Lake Bunyonyi down chicks were on a floating, semi-submerged weed patch some distance from the shore. In their efforts to escape they were expert at diving and hiding under the weed, and only one then came to hand. The other was caught three days later. Benson informs me that at Karonga, in Nyasaland, two recently hatched chicks submerged with only the bill and nostrils above the water level when his wife approached them too closely (see drawing).

Bannerman (3: p. 79) refers to this method of concealment, by the adults, "If occasion arises—for instance, should it be wounded—it swims and dives well, hiding itself among the leaves and grass of the pond with only its bill above water".

Distraction behaviour by parents. When I was trying to catch the two chicks on Lake Bunyonyi, the parents were exceptionally noisy, uttering a plaintive 'teeter-ing' cry, besides going through a variety of antics, including the 'wounded' bird demonstration, with trailing wing or wings and eventual collapse.

Posture of the head and neck in flight. Priest (4: p. 162) quotes Swynerton, that when *Actophilornis* makes a somewhat prolonged flight "the neck is curved back, with the head resting down between the shoulders". I have never witnessed this, nor have any of the authoritative observers to whom I have referred this matter. I have invariably seen the head and neck outstretched when in flight. On landing, or when skipping from one piece of aquatic vegetation to another, *Actophilornis* has the curious habit of raising its wings butterflywise, perpendicularly above its back.

References:—

- (1) Cave, F. O. and Macdonald, J. D. *Birds of the Sudan*, 1955.
- (2) Chapin, J. P. *Birds of the Belgian Congo*, II, 1939.
- (3) Bannerman, D. A. *Birds of Tropical West Africa*, II, 1931.
- (4) Priest, C. D. *Birds of Southern Rhodesia*, II, 1934.

The Status of *Campethera bennettii vincenti* Grant & Mackworth-Praed

by MR. C. W. BENSON

Received 17th February, 1960

This form was described by Grant & Mackworth-Praed ('Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.' 73, 1953: 55), on the basis of part of the material also examined and discussed by myself ('Ostrich' 23, 1952: 152). These specimens are in my opinion, as already shown, intermediate between *C. b. bennettii* (Smith) and *C. b. scriptoricauda* (Reichenow). The latter form is treated by Mackworth-Praed & Grant ('Birds of Eastern and North Eastern Africa' 2, 1952) as a subspecies of *C. nubica*, an arrangement with which I cannot agree. I also feel that *C. b. vincenti* is so unstable, and occupies so restricted an area, near the boundary of south-western Nyasaland with Portuguese East Africa for less than 150 miles north/south, that it is not worth recognising.